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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this manual is to provide teachers and other instructional personnel with an understanding of disruptive behavior and effective techniques to use in dealing with children who are disruptive in the classroom. An introductory chapter describes and defines disruptive behavior, explains possible by-products of disruptive behavior, and examines how to measure disruptive behavior. The manual describes three techniques that have been developed and validated in the applied behavioral management research in both general and special education settings. These techniques can be used in regular classes and resource programs providing consultation to regular education teachers, as well as resource pull-out programs and special education classes and sites. The techniques include: (1) catch them being good, which involves praising the appropriate behavior of children and ignoring disruptive behavior; (2) behavioral contracting, which specifies the child's behavioral obligations in meeting the terms of a written contract and the teacher's obligations in providing an agreed-upon reward once the child has met his or her obligation; and (3) a variation of the "good behavior game" in which the whole class as a team or as two or three teams receive positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior. The manual concludes with a copy of the Council for Exceptional Children's Policy on Physical Intervention. (JDD)

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DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

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To help those in the field respond to their ever-increasing classroom challenges, CEC is proud to release *Disruptive Behavior: Three Techniques to Use in Your Classroom.*

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Disruptive Behavior

Three Techniques to Use in Your Classroom

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Foreword

At the 1993 Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas, The Council for Exceptional Children passed a policy on physical intervention that stresses the right of each child receiving special education services to have a learning environment in which the educational strategies used are (a) the most effective for changing behavior and (b) the least restrictive possible in terms of preserving the child's dignity and personal privacy. This publication on managing disruptive behavior presents several alternatives to more restrictive methods of discipline. Research has shown that the strategies presented are effective and have been used successfully by professionals and parents to develop more positive behaviors in children.

Dr. Ennio Cipani has initiated this mini-library series on Classroom Management because he recognized the need to gather these techniques into an integrated collection for use by teachers and others responsible for managing problem behaviors. The books use familiar classroom scenarios for presenting each strategy. The easy-to-read style and step-by-step analysis of each strategy make the books in this series easy and fun to use.

Being a teacher of children with special needs is a rewarding albeit demanding career. The Council for Exceptional Children recognizes its responsibility to share best practices and support those who work with special children. To this end, we are pleased to add this book to our growing collection of resources.

George E. Ayers
Executive Director

August 20, 1993

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Introduction

Purpose of This Classroom Management Manual

The purpose of this manual is to provide teachers and other instructional personnel with an understanding of disruptive behavior and effective techniques to use in dealing with children who are disruptive in the classroom. The manual describes three techniques that have been developed and validated in the applied behavioral management research in both general and special education settings. These techniques can be used in a variety of settings where children are disruptive—in regular classes and resource programs providing consultation to regular education teachers, as well as resource pull-out programs and special education classes and sites.

A child's disruptive behavior should be addressed early in the child's educational life. This manual is particularly appropriate for instructional personnel who work with children in preschool and the elementary grades. This is not to imply that the techniques could not be employed in classrooms with older students; however, some variation in the rewards and procedures would have to be developed. It is better for disruptive behavior to be addressed early in a child's educational life so that the child will receive the full benefit of classroom instruction.

The author expresses his sincere appreciation to Lucy DeRose, Lori Tirapelle and Patricia Cipani for their helpful comments and suggestions regarding the form and content of this manual.

Description of Disruptive Behavior

> Mrs. Nathan, a second grade teacher, dreads having to deal with Johnny each day when she assigns seatwork to her class. Johnny often verbally interrupts Mrs. Nathan when she is presenting the instructions for the seatwork to the class. It is not uncommon for Mrs. Nathan to have to send Johnny to the corner during seatwork. Johnny often disturbs other students during class by grabbing their papers, pencils, or books. This results in arguing, sometimes fighting, and frequent complaints from other students about Johnny's behavior. He is out of his seat frequently—going for water, sharpening his pencil, and bothering other students en route. He often incites other students to ignore the teacher while she is giving instructions. Despite his frequent visits to the principal and numerous parent conferences, Johnny's disruptive behavior has not changed significantly since the beginning of the school year. Mrs. Nathan feels she is losing control of her class because she cannot control Johnny's disruptive behavior. If Mrs. Nathan had three wishes from a genie, two of them would be used for Johnny!

This scenario represents a teacher's worst nightmare. It depicts a child who is disruptive during instructional periods, often disturbing other students as well as the teacher's instructional plan. The child seems to be unaffected by standard disciplinary actions involving spending time out in the corner and/or being sent to the principal's office.

Disruptive behavior is any behavior that disturbs the instructional environment. For example, a child picks up a book and drops it on the ground while the teacher is presenting a lesson on time telling. Another child gets out of his seat and runs around the classroom. Another child tells the student next to him to "shut up" in a loud voice. Throwing a pencil and/or paper at other students is another example of disruptive behavior. Students who act aggressively toward others in a verbal or physical manner also exhibit disruptive behavior. The list of disruptive behaviors is lengthy.

Possible By-Products of Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior in children can be problematic for the teacher, the other children in the class, and the child who is being disruptive. It

disrupts the instructional activity for some period of time. Obviously, the longer the child is disruptive, the greater the disruption to the instructional program. The disruption also affects other students as they attempt to learn. Disruptive behavior affects the student who is disruptive because it interferes with his or her ability to profit from the instructional experience in school.

Disruptive behavior is often a primary or secondary contributor to discipline referrals, which subsequently lead to special parent conferences. If discipline practices prove ineffective and disruptive behavior reaches problematic levels, the child's current educational placement can be jeopardized. You may know children who have been placed in special education or in a more restrictive educational placement such as a segregated site or a nonpublic school not because they are incapable of learning, but because their disruptive behavior was intolerable to the teacher and other students in the class. This is when instructional and behavioral techniques that are effective in dealing with disruptive behavior need to be put in place *before* the scenario reaches the stage where the child is controlling the situation.

When Is Disruptive Behavior a Problem?

Even the best-behaved children are occasionally disruptive. For example, Sally, a well-behaved child, might giggle at a joke made by another student while you are giving directions and instructions to the class in regard to an upcoming field trip. When should you be concerned about an individual child's disruptive behavior? The following factors separate severely disruptive children from others.

1. *Frequency.* The more frequent the occurrence of disruptive behavior, the greater the problem.
2. *Age of the child.* The younger the child, the less a problem occasional disruptive behavior is.
3. *Severity.* The more severe the form of the disruptive behavior, the greater the problem.

How to Define Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior has been defined in research studies as a variation of the following:

> Any motor behavior that disrupts the attention and/or activities of another student, e.g., hitting, kicking or striking another child with an object, grabbing another's book, tearing up another's paper, clapping, stamping feet, turning to the person behind you or looking to the rear of the room when the teacher is in front of the room, loud talking, screaming, unauthorized out of seat or talking behavior (Medland & Stachnik, 1972, p. 47).

Your own definition of disruptive behavior can often be tailored to fit the specifics of your classroom and circumstances. A good starting point is to adopt the initial part of this definition, which indicates any motor behavior that disrupts the attention or activities of another student, and then to provide examples that meet or better represent the specific circumstances of student behavior in your classroom.

How to Measure Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior can usually be measured by recording how often it occurs—simply counting the number of times a given child or children exhibit any instance of disruptive behavior. Once you have defined the types of behaviors that comprise disruptive behavior, each occurrence of disruptive behavior is recorded. Therefore, if Billy threw his pencil at Susan at 9:05, got out of his seat at 9:07, and shouted to another student at 9:10 (while you were reading a story to the class), the frequency of disruptive behaviors for that short time period would be three.

In some cases the frequency of disruptive behavior may be so high as to preclude your counting each occurrence in so short a period of time. Tantrums (another example of disruptive behavior) can go on for long periods of time. In those cases, sometimes measuring the length of time the disruptive behavior goes on may be a better way to measure the level of disruptive behavior. In the previous scenario, if many behaviors occurred between 9:07 and 9:12, rather than count each incident of disruptive behavior, you may just record the length of time to be about 4 minutes. At the end of the day you add up all the entries to come up with a total length of time the child was disruptive for that day.

A third, and easier, method for measuring disruptive behavior each day is the use of a rating scale within a defined period of time. The rating scale can be from one to five, with one being zero or one occurrence

of disruptive behavior and five being a high rate of disruptive behavior. You can use this rating scale each instructional period, rating the level of disruptive behavior by estimating the number of times you felt the child was disruptive. By doing this, you do not have to count each time. This technique is easier than the other two, but it is not as precise. An example of the rating scale is shown in Figure 1 for six instructional periods for a hypothetical child.

FIGURE 1
Rating Scale for Disruptive Behaviors

Student: Student A

Rating Scale Point Values:

1. Zero or one occurrence of disruptive behavior that period.
2. Two to four occurrences of disruptive behavior that period (estimated).
3. More than four occurrences of disruptive behavior that period (estimated).
4. More than eight occurrences of disruptive behavior that period (estimated).

Class Period	*Rating Obtained*
1	
2	3
3	4
4	2
5	1
6	4

Tips for Gathering Data

1. Use wrist counters whenever possible to record frequency data.
2. If you are going to count the number of occurrences without a wrist counter, use slash marks on a data sheet that is readily available to you (e.g., taped to your desk).
3. Use a tape recorder to record instances of behavior as well as the child's name. You can collect data on many children at a time in this way.
4. Carry a stopwatch to record the duration of each episode of disruptive behavior. This technique can facilitate the collection of data for a given child; however, it becomes unwieldy when collecting data on many children.
5. If you are hard pressed to collect data through frequency or duration measures, use the easier method of collecting rating data periodically (see Figure 1).
6. Realize that you have other duties. Sometimes just collecting data once or twice every few weeks may have to suffice.

Three Techniques for Dealing with Children Who Are Disruptive

This chapter presents three techniques for dealing with disruptive children in the classroom. This does not exhaust the list of techniques available, but it gives an in-depth look at how the three techniques can be of use. It is important to remember that there is no one way to deal with all disruptive children. Not one of the techniques offered here will work for every child. The selection of which technique to implement depends on whether a single child or a few children are being targeted, the general level of disruptive behavior in the classroom, and the possible reason(s) for disruptive behavior.

Catch Them Being Good

"Johnny loves negative attention. I know he does those things to get me upset and make the class laugh. His classmates think he's cute when he does something to distract me from the lesson and I have to call him on it." Sound familiar? Some children are disruptive because of the attention their disruption receives, whether the attention is from you or from other classmates. Attention can often be in the form of reminders (e.g., "Please stay in your seat and be quiet while I am reading with the Batman reading group"). It can also be in the form of more negative comments (e.g., "Johnny, how many times have I told you not to throw your pencil at Bryan!"). In some cases, teachers may make comments to students that are (a) demeaning and (b) draw attention to those students from their classmates. For example, "Barbara, that was the dumbest thing I've ever seen," is certainly demeaning, but it may draw the attention of the rest

of the class to Barbara's behavior. Such attention may be appealing to Barbara. She may then see it as a way to get her classmates' attention. The scenario that follows describes the case of a hypothetical child who is disruptive because his disruptive behavior results in unusual comments from the teacher.

> During seatwork assignments, William seems to be constantly involved in some kind of inappropriate and disruptive classroom behavior. Mrs. Rutherford has to constantly remind him to stop disrupting the class and return to his seat. When he is in his seat, William often turns around and teases the student behind him, or he taps the person in front of him and begins talking loudly. When Mrs. Rutherford sees that, she often redirects him back to work with some kind of comment such as, "William, once again you win the motor mouth contest for the day! Stand up and take a bow. Now that you have received your just recognition, please return to work!" Of course William and his friends break up in laughter, which then gets Mrs. Rutherford's "goat." Sometimes Mrs. Rutherford sends William out into the hall when he is disruptive, and sometimes she sends him to the school principal. Mrs. Rutherford complains to the school student success team that she cannot control William's frequent disruptive classroom behavior. She wants him assessed for possible attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder.

Note that in this scenario the teacher's attention often follows the disruptive behavior. In particular, making a comment about William's disruptive behavior only seems to reinforce such behavior. William and his friends think it is funny to win the "motor mouth" contest of the day. Mrs. Rutherford may be inadvertently encouraging a contest that others may wish to enter as well.

Steps of the Catch Them Being Good Technique

1. Identify instances of disruptive behaviors.
2. Identify instances of nondisruptive and appropriate classroom behaviors.
3. Implement the beeper system (explained below) at the start of each class period. When the beeper sounds, praise a number of students (including the children who are the focus of your concern) if they are not engaged in disruptive behavior.

4. When a child is disruptive, ignore the disruptive behavior (unless the nature of the behavior cannot be ignored; see Step #6 below).

5. At the same time you are ignoring a child's disruptive behavior, direct your attention to others who are being appropriate and praise children who are adjacent to the target child for their appropriate behavior.

6. If a child is engaged in severely disruptive behavior, remove him or her to a time-out area for a short period of time. The first step in implementing this technique is to identify the types of behavior that are disruptive. These are the behaviors you will ignore. Also, at this time, identify those disruptive behaviors that cannot be ignored (e.g., aggression, loud and violent tantrums, etc.). Try to keep this list short. Concurrently, identify those nondisruptive behaviors that you will attend to and praise when they occur. Identify the individual child or children who will be the focus of this technique.

You may need some help to deliver praise for appropriate behavior in a systematic manner. An auditory cue or signal to look around every so often and deliver praise and attention for nondisruptive behavior will allow you to incorporate this technique more readily into your instructional plans. The beeper system (Erken & Henderson, 1987) involves the presentation of audible beeps at random intervals within a class period. Each beep cues you to scan the class and praise appropriate classroom behavior. This technique provides a certain number of opportunities for children in the class to earn praise. The beeper system works best when a tape recorder is used to present beeps at random intervals for designated periods of time (e.g., 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, etc.). The tape is an efficient way of cueing you, for you do not have to rely on memory alone to cue praise. The beeper system must be audible so it can be heard anywhere in the room from your desk, with or without earplugs.

When the beep sounds, you scan the class and praise the children of concern if they are not engaged in disruptive behavior at that time. You can praise other children for nondisruptive classroom behavior at the same time. You may also want to implement a point system whereby points are given to students who are not engaged in disruptive behavior. They can trade these points in later for free time.

When an individual child is being disruptive, withhold your attention from that child. Instead, praise the appropriate behavior of children who are adjacent to the child. For example, "I like the way Johnny and Susan are doing their work. Ashley, you are sitting so nicely." Notice

that your attention is diverted to behavior that is appropriate and not to the specific incident of disruptive behavior. However, if the child is severely disruptive, remove him or her to a time out away from the general area for a short period of time so that the disruption does not continue to disturb other students.

One comment that sometimes comes up needs to be addressed. The suggestion to some teachers to "catch them being good" is often met with "I don't have the time. I have too many children to make this workable. I don't have time to praise children in my class on a frequent basis. If I do this, I won't have enough time to devote to my instructional duties." There are several ways to respond to this objection. First, it is true that using the strategy of praising children when they are not disruptive may initially take a lot of time from the teacher and he or she may feel overwhelmed. *Consistently* praising appropriate behavior is a new skill for some teachers, and it may feel as though it takes an inordinate amount of time away from other activities. However, the more you practice praising children frequently, the more natural it will feel, and it will become an inherent part of your teaching repertoire. Second, after this initial "learning period" there may actually be no more time invested in dealing with disruptive situations than was invested previously. Very often, using this positive strategy merely requires a shift in teacher attention: There will be drastically decreased amounts of attention paid to disruptive behavior balanced by increased amounts of attention paid to nondisruptive behavior. Also, as a child's behavior improves, the need for praise becomes less frequent, thus allowing more time for other teaching duties. Finally, praise for appropriate behavior makes school more fun for the children and motivates them to learn. Consider using healthy doses of praise as a good investment in a child's future in school.

Teachers must realize that disruptive behaviors do not go away by magic. There is an appropriate saying you can use with teachers who do not want to entertain any new techniques to overcome disruptive behavior: "If you keep doing what you're doing, you'll keep getting what you're getting!"

Let's see how "Catch them being good" helps reverse the negative cycle of disruptive behavior and attention. Using this technique, the teacher ignores most incidences of disruption (except in the case of severe disruptive behavior) while attending and praising nondisruptive behavior from the disruptive child and from adjacent peers. When the child is being disruptive, the teacher praises other classmates around him or her for their appropriate classroom behavior. When the child is not being disruptive, the teacher focuses the praise on him or her. The following hypothetical example illustrates the basic steps of "Catch them being good."

Mrs. Rutherford agrees with the student success team to try to praise William when he is engaged in appropriate classroom behavior. She defines disruptive behavior as any occurrence of unauthorized out-of-seat behavior during class, or any unauthorized talking to other students in the class (Step 1). She identifies nondisruptive behavior as any behavior that falls outside the examples of disruptive behaviors (Step 2). Mrs. Rutherford initially agrees to try this technique out during first and second period to determine whether or not it will work. She gets a series of audiotapes that contain 20 beeps in a 20 minute session (two tapes are needed for each period). She sets the audiotape at the beginning for each period (Step 3). When the first beep sounds, she observes William, who is doing his work nicely, and says, "William, way to go, nice work. I also like the way Sarah, Wayne, and Robert are doing their work. Maybe we can finish early if everyone works this hard!" (Step 4). Shortly after, she observes William out of his seat. She ignores him (by not saying anything), but looks around for three other students who are not being disruptive and praises them (Steps 5 and 6). William gets back in his seat and continues his seat assignment. The next beep finds William working hard, and Mrs. Rutherford praises him profusely. If William throws a tantrum and screams at any point in the class period, he is removed from the class and loses one recess period that day (Step 7).

Additional Suggestions and Considerations

1. Initially, select a few class periods when you will use this strategy. This will make it easier for you to get used to praising appropriate behavior more frequently. As you become more accomplished and as the strategy becomes successful, you can expand it to other class periods.

2. In large classes, when the beep goes off on the tape recorder, scan the class and praise a sample of the children who are not being disruptive. It will be impossible to praise all of the children in the class each time. You can catch other deserving children at subsequent beeps.

3. Initially, begin with a higher frequency of beeps per class period. Audiotapes that have a certain number of beeps for class periods of 20 minutes, 30 minutes, and 45 minutes are commercially available (Erkin & Henderson, 1987). If you do not purchase the

commercially available audio tapes, then design your own. Be sure to have several different variations of beeps for a 20-minute class. If you use only one tape, the children may eventually memorize the timing of the beeps on that tape. For example, on a tape for a 20-minute class period with 15 beeps, you may design three different versions so that the beeps do not always appear at the same point on each tape.

4. If you are going to use points in addition to praise, it is wise to select a program manager from the class who will keep track of the points on a chart or billboard for each child as you call out the names of those children who are not disruptive when the beep goes off.
5. If peer reinforcement is a factor, see technique number 3, Variation of the "Good Behavior Game," later in this manual.
6. If disruptive behavior occurs in a compliance situation, use the techniques appropriate for noncompliance (see *Non-compliance: Four Strategies That Work* in this CEC Classroom Management Series).
7. Consider gradually thinning the ratio of beeps each period so that less praise and fewer points have to be awarded.
8. If this technique is successful in dealing with disruptive behavior, continue its use. If not, try another technique.

Behavioral Contracting

Behavioral contracting is an excellent strategy for reducing a child's disruptive behavior if you have one child or just a few who are being disruptive. A behavioral contract is a written contract that specifies the child's behavioral obligations in meeting the terms of the contract and the teacher's (or parent's) obligations once the child has met his or her obligation. If the child needs an incentive to engage in an activity he or she does not like (or dreads), behavioral contracting is an excellent way to reduce disruptive behavior. The following is a scenario depicting a hypothetical first grade child who does not enjoy listening to the teacher read a story while she sits on the carpet with the other children.

> During story time, Melissa is hard to control. The teacher, Mr. Zumwalt, places Melissa right next to him in the hope that this will make Melissa less distractible. But this has not worked. Melissa is constantly getting up and wandering around the class. When she is asked to come back to the carpet

area to listen to the story, she often has a tantrum. Melissa can handle about 3 minutes of story time, but she subsequently becomes bored and leaves the group. Mr. Zumwalt tried giving Melissa mints for a 2-week period as an incentive, but they were of no avail in keeping her in the story time activity.

Do you have children like Melissa? The grade level and instructional context can be different, but the disruptive behaviors and their purpose are the same. Melissa enjoys story time only for a few minutes. After that, listening becomes a task she dislikes, and she prefers doing something else. While many other children develop attention skills for longer periods of time, some children have great difficulty acquiring this skill. The teacher may try pleading with them and cajoling them to be good, but often those techniques do not work, or at best they are successful for only a brief time. The point of confrontation and conflict is clear: Mr. Zumwalt wants Melissa to stay on the carpet and attend to the story to its completion. Melissa wants to end her participation in the first few minutes. Can there be a resolution?

When there is a dispute between two parties in everyday life, contracts are negotiated. The following contract might be helpful in breaking the stalemate between Melissa and Mr. Zumwalt.

1. I, Melissa Shaeffer, agree to stay on the carpet and listen to the story being read by Mr. Zumwalt for the first 5 minutes of each story time in class.

2. In exchange Mr. Zumwalt agrees to let me go play quietly for the remainder of the story with a toy close to the carpet.

3. This contract is valid for the following 2-week period beginning March 1. It expires 14 days hence, at which time a new contract will be drawn up.

Note that Melissa's behavioral obligation is to attend to the story for a set period of time, 5 minutes as measured by a kitchen timer. Melissa obligates herself to do this during Mr. Zumwalt's storybook reading each day. In consideration of Melissa's obligation to be nondisruptive and to pay attention during this time, the teacher will allow Melissa to skip the last few minutes of the story and play with a toy, provided Melissa has lived up to her part of the bargain. Across time, the length of time that Melissa will sit and listen to the story can be increased. However, note that on the current contract these obligations expire in 2 weeks; therefore, a new contract will have to be written up.

Behavioral contracting is a good way to teach children to learn the following adult-like behaviors:

1. Develop self-control and responsibility for one's own behavior through verbal or written obligation.
2. Learn to negotiate and compromise with other people and begin to self-monitor behavior according to a designated standard. In this particular case, Melissa negotiates both the level of attending behavior required by her during story time and the incentive for her to perform to that level of attention.

The Steps of Behavioral Contracting

1. Identify instances of disruptive behavior.
2. Specify the number of disruptive behaviors that will be allowed under the contract for a designated period of time or the length of time the child must go without disruptive behaviors.
3. Specify your obligations (incentives) when the child's behavior matches or exceeds the contract.
4. Identify the time when the child will get the incentive.
5. If needed, specify additional consequences for severely disruptive behaviors; these can include time out.
6. If needed, specify additional consequences if the child does not meet his or her obligations under the contract (e.g., removal of other privileges).

In a behavioral contract, if you focus on decreasing disruptive behavior, you first identify the instance of disruptive behavior you wish to count and then specify how many occurrences you will allow before it is considered excessive and in violation of the contract. To come up with a fair and reasonable number, consider the child's current level of disruptive behavior. For example, if the daily average of disruptive instances is 12, then selecting a slightly lower number (e.g., 10) as the standard will make it possible for the child to be successful. In the contract, specify when you will provide the agreed-upon incentive, and whether it will be an activity, a tangible item, or a privilege in the class. If possible, involve parents in providing part or all of the incentive at home when you communicate to them that their child succeeded on his or her contract (see Additional Suggestions and Considerations). Again, time out (removal from the classroom situation) can be used if the child

engages in severely disruptive behaviors. Finally, you can specify additional consequences such as loss of recess, loss of video games for one night at home, or loss of a half hour at bedtime if the child does not meet his or her obligations under the contract. Try to design contracts initially with just positive incentives for achieving the goal.

Additional Suggestions and Considerations

1. Initially, design the behavioral contract to be short term (e.g., 2, 3, or 5 days, depending on the age and social maturity of the child. As the child's behavior improves, gradually increase the length of time involved in the behavioral contract.
2. Design the contract so that the standard of "acceptable" disruptive behavior is within reach of the child's current behavioral level. As the child's behavior improves, gradually decrease the level of "acceptable" disruptive behavior required by the child to meet his or her obligations under the contract.
3. Involve parents when possible by allowing them to provide some (or all) of the incentives for the behavioral contract. This is called *home-based reinforcement*, and you will need to communicate with the parents regularly regarding their child's meeting (or not meeting) the obligations of the contract so that they can provide (or not provide) the incentives.
4. If peer reinforcement is the motivating factor behind the child's disruptive behavior, consider a group-designed behavioral contract. This would involve incentives for the group that are conditional upon the group's performance on the contract.
5. If this technique is successful, continue with the strategy. If not, try another strategy.

Variation of the "Good Behavior Game"

Do you have a child in your class who is the class clown? When she or he is disruptive, do the others giggle or smile? Do you find that this child is not particularly responsive to your praise, but enjoys the attention of classmates? Have all of your efforts to dissuade the child from behaving in a disruptive fashion met with failure? If the answer to these questions is yes, the child is probably acting disruptively to gain peer attention and reinforcement.

Strategies or techniques that focus on individual behavior may not be effective for this type of child. What is needed is a strategy that shifts peer attention from the disruptive behavior to appropriate behaviors, especially in light of the power that peer attention possesses with these children. The thrill of a game-like situation for appropriate behavior would be an additional motivator. The Good Behavior game (Medland & Stachnik, 1972) is such a technique.

The Good Behavior game is a strategy in which teams are drawn up and behavioral standards are set. The following is a hypothetical situation in which the good behavior game might be indicated:

> Linda often disrupts Mrs. Stanwick during instruction. While Mrs. Stanwick is presenting a lesson, Linda often drops her pencil, then looks over to see whether Lorenzo and Bobby are watching her. She also drops other materials on the floor while Mrs. Stanwick is speaking and giggles when that occurs. Mrs. Stanwick has noticed that Lorenzo and Bobby also think it's funny and smile at her. Additionally, Mrs. Stanwick has noted that Linda passes notes to her friends in an obvious fashion so that Mrs. Stanwick has to attend to her. Mrs. Stanwick has tried scolding Linda, putting her in time out, and telling others to ignore her behavior, and several times she has detained her from recess. However, these efforts have been fruitless. Mrs. Stanwick knows that if Lorenzo and Bobby did not find these behaviors cute, Linda would probably stop being disruptive.

This scenario is representative of a classroom situation in which peer reinforcement is responsible for the student's disruptive behaviors. In fact, Mrs. Stanwick's ignoring her does not deter Linda from continued disruptive behavior. Linda wants to be "called" for such behavior to gain the attention of her classmates, and she will persist until she achieves that peer attention. Mrs. Stanwick has to intervene, but she knows that she is giving Linda what she wants—"center stage."

Steps of a Variation of the Good Behavior Game

1. Identify instances of disruptive behaviors and the students who are frequently engaged in such.
2. Identify an acceptable level of disruptive behaviors for any given class.

3. Make two or three teams, placing a disruptive child on each of the teams, or have the whole class act as one team.

4. Design a good behavior barometer (explained below).

5. Set a timer to indicate the length of the class period in which the teams will be responsible for monitoring the level of disruptive behavior.

6. When a student is disruptive, mark a point off the good behavior barometer for that team.

7. If the child is severely disruptive, remove the child from the game (and from the class if necessary) for that class period.

8. At the end of the period, identify those teams that have reached the standard, and award the designated number of points.

9. At the end of the day, any team that has acquired a designated number of points gets to select a reward from a menu of rewards for the next day.

10. The team with the most points at the end of the week can draw for a special prize in the lottery pick (explained below).

The first step to implementing this variation of the Good Behavior game is to identify instances of disruptive behavior. Write them on a piece of paper, and make the entire class aware of them, by both oral presentation and posting them on a bulletin board. Identify the child or children who are frequently disruptive. Make two or three teams, putting a disruptive child on each of the teams so that no one team has an advantage in terms of number of children who are disruptive. If you do not wish to make teams, then have the whole class constitute a single team.

Next, design a "good behavior barometer"—a chart with numbers that identify the standard for the number of disruptive incidences that are allowed. For example, if you decided that each team could have no more than five disruptive behaviors, the good behavior barometer would have the numbers 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 and then a little hole for the mercury at the bottom. Each time a child in a given team disrupts the class, the team barometer is marked down one. If all the numbers are marked, the team (or class) gets no points. If you encounter a child who becomes severely disruptive, remove the child from the game and from the class for that time period. That child will not get the reinforcer for that day. This can be posted as a rule along with the other rules regarding the criteria for counting disruptive behaviors.

At the end of the period, any team still having points on the good behavior barometer is allowed to earn a certain number of points. At the end of the day, teams that have acquired the number of points that you have designated earn a group reward from a reward menu. In setting the number of points that a team should earn, identify the total number of points they could possibly earn and then select a percentage of those points. This can be altered up or down as a function of the first few weeks of performance.

An additional incentive is to allow the teams to compete throughout the entire week. The team having the most points at the end of the week has the opportunity to draw from a grab bag full of a number of prizes, activities, or additional rewards. You can use a fishbowl with each prize written on a slip of paper that is folded so the child cannot see. One representative of the winning team selects one piece of paper. For this incentive, try to think of a number of prizes that cost a minimal amount of money, if any. However, you should also have some prizes that a team would really cherish. Make sure that the probability of selecting the more costly prizes is low and that the prizes are affordable.

Let's see how this technique works in practice using Mrs. Stanwick and her class as the illustration.

> Mrs. Stanwick identifies the rules of the Good Behavior game. The following behaviors result in the loss of a point on the good behavior barometer for each occurrence:
>
> 1. Getting out of seat during seatwork.
> 2. Unauthorized talking during seatwork.
> 3. Failing to keep hands and feet to oneself (Step 1).
>
> Mrs. Stanwick indicates that each team will have nine points on the good behavior barometer (Steps 2 and 4) at the start of each period. There will be three teams, with Linda on Team A and two other children with disruptive behaviors assigned to each of the two remaining teams (Step 3). The time will be set for the length of each class period (Step 5). Once Mrs. Stanwick has gone over the rules, the Good Behavior game is initiated for math class. As team members violate one of the rules, their team loses a point on the good behavior barometer (Step 6). At the end of the period, all teams that still have points on the barometer earn 20 points (Step 8). At the end of the day, all teams achieving 70% of the total number of points select a representative to choose their reward, to be given the next day (Step 9).

Additional Suggestions and Considerations

1. Alter the make-up of the teams every few weeks so that no one team can dominate the "Best Team of the Week" award.

2. Use this variation of the Good Behavior game for class periods in which disruptive behavior has been a problem. Begin with a few class periods initially, and as the program meets with success, you can gradually increase the number of periods through the entire day.

3. In order to avoid any potential concerns from parents or students regarding the team concept, the rewards employed for the weekly drawing should be events, objects, and activities that are not usually available to the students. In other words, do not take something that they already have on a noncontingent basis and begin using it as an incentive.

4. Explain to the parents at a parent/teacher conference or meeting at the beginning of this program that the team concept encourages both cooperation and competition. Since most of the prizes (except the weekly prize) can be earned by each team irrespective of the other teams' performance, the game encourages cooperation within the group. The teams do compete among themselves for the weekly prize.

5. If one child seems to inhibit a team from reaching the standard on a consistent basis, implement the variation of the Good Behavior game with the other classmates and set up an individualized program for that child. In that manner the team members will not be consistently penalized for having the child who is frequently disruptive in their group. This child may form his or her own team and another strategy may be employed.

6. If you wish to minimize the competitive aspect of having a weekly winning team, you can also set up a weekly criterion for the teams to meet to become eligible for the lottery pick. This allows every team to be eligible to win the weekly prize as well, as long at that team achieves the number of points needed. One team can be selected randomly from the eligible teams for the "big prize" in order to keep the cost of this program manageable. Random drawings would not give preference to any one eligible team, and all teams would be motivated to try their best to achieve the behavioral standard.

7. If this technique is successful, continue with the strategy. If not, try another strategy.

Conclusion

A teacher should have an array of techniques for dealing with disruptive children. One technique will not be all powerful in dealing with every disruptive child. This manual presented three techniques that can form the basis of a set of tools for handling disruptive children. The techniques presented here do not exhaust the range of techniques that can be found in the research literature, but they have been found effective in dealing with disruptive children.

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CEC Policy on Physical Intervention

The Council recognizes the right to the most effective educational strategies to be the basic educational right of each special education child. Furthermore, the Council believes that the least restrictive positive educational strategies should be used, as it relates to physical intervention, to respect the child's dignity and personal privacy. Additionally, the Council believes that such interventions shall assure the child's physical freedom, social interaction, and individual choice. The intervention must not include procedures which cause pain or trauma. Lastly, behavior intervention plans must be specifically described in the child's written educational plan with agreement from the education staff, the parents, and, when appropriate, the child.

The Council recommends that physical intervention be used only if **all** the following requirements are met:

- The child's behavior is dangerous to herself/himself or others, or the behavior is extremely detrimental to or interferes with the education or development of the child.
- Various positive reinforcement techniques have been implemented appropriately and the child has repeatedly failed to respond as documented in the child's records.
- It is evident that withholding physical intervention would significantly impede the child's educational progress as explicitly defined in his/her written educational plan.

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San Antonio, Texas

- The physical intervention plan specifically will describe the intervention to be implemented, the staff to be responsible for the implementation, the process for documentation, the required training of staff, and supervision of staff as it relates to the intervention and when the intervention will be replaced.
- The physical intervention plan will become part of the written educational plan.
- The physical intervention plan shall encompass the following provisions:
  - A comprehensive analysis of the child's environment including variables contributing to the inappropriate behavior;
  - The plan to be developed by a team including professional and parents/guardians, as designated by state/provincial and federal law;
  - The personnel implementing the plan shall receive specific training congruent with the contents of the plan and receive ongoing supervision from individuals who are trained and skilled in the techniques identified in the plan;
  - The techniques identified in the physical intervention plan are approved by a physician to not be medically contraindicated for the child (a statement from the physician is necessary); and
  - The impact of the plan on the child's behavior must be consistently evaluated, the results documented, and the plan modified when indicated.

The Council supports the following prohibitions:

- Any intervention that is designed to, or likely to, cause physical pain;
- Releasing noxious, toxic or otherwise unpleasant sprays, mists, or substances in proximity to the child's face;
- Any intervention which denies adequate sleep, food, water, shelter, bedding, physical comfort, or access to bathroom facilities;
- Any intervention which is designed to subject, used to subject, or likely to subject the individual to verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation, or which can be expected to cause excessive emotional trauma;

- Restrictive interventions which employ a device or material or objects that simultaneously immobilize all four extremities, including the procedure known as prone containment, except that prone containment may be used by trained personnel as a limited emergency intervention;
- Locked seclusion, unless under constant surveillance and observation;
- Any intervention that precludes adequate supervision of the child; and
- Any intervention which deprives the individual of one or more of his or her senses.

The Council recognizes that emergency physical intervention may be implemented if the child's behavior poses an imminent and significant threat to his/her physical well-being or to the safety of others. The intervention must be documented and parents/guardians must be notified of the incident.

- However, emergency physical intervention shall not be used as a substitute for systematic behavioral intervention plans that are designed to change, replace, modify, or eliminate a targeted behavior.
- Furthermore, the Council expects school districts and other educational agencies to establish policies and comply with state/provincial and federal law and regulations to ensure the protection of the rights of the child, the parent/guardian, the education staff, and the school and local educational agency when physical intervention is applied.

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